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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [OIIP](#) [PROP](#) [KPAO](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: PARWAN AND KAPISA RADIO: OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

REF: KABUL 3376

Classified By: Interagency Provincial Affairs Deputy Coordinator Hoyt Y  
ee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: An initial assessment of the media environment in the eastern Afghan provinces of Parwan and Kapisa reveals a thriving radio community with remarkable outreach capabilities with the local population, operating in the midst of an ever-present insurgency. Two local radio station owners in particular rely on prominent community figures to disseminate progressive ideals. Both benefit from family roots to uphold their credibility with the population. These stations are making great strides in serving their communities, building respectful relationships with US partners and providing a counter-balance to extremist ideas. Department of State officers working with Task Force Cyclone are working to identify opportunities to connect through these radio outlets with their provincial audience, especially younger listeners and women. End Summary.

12. (C) While many Afghans in Parwan and Kapisa Provinces listen to national radio broadcasts, two small local stations - Peace Radio (Parwan) and Nijrab Radio (Kapisa) - have carved out a loyal following and benefit from deep roots in their communities. The two stations received their initial support from Internews, a USAID-funded international NGO that works to empower local radio stations around the world. They now receive funding from a variety of sources including local donations, advertising, NGOs, paid programming (including U.S. military messaging) and personal funds. They employ internal and external (Internews and Equal Access) surveys to assess their listenership and each claim to have a wide audience in their coverage area. The station owners maintain a close relationship with each other and regularly share information about their activities. They also join forces with local and national associations of journalists and media personalities to support independent journalism in Afghanistan.

13. (C) The stations each have 20-30 different programs on education, women's issues, legal rights, Islamic law, local history, war stories, youth, news, religion, poetry, music, community awareness and call-in shows, with the majority of programming done in-house by both male and female journalists. Existing programs also include dialogue with local officials, where the stations collect inquiries and complaints from the community and relay these complaints to local officials or, if relevant U.S. military commanders, for a response. No independent, reliable data has been collected on the coverage or listenership of each of these stations, but military psy-ops officials are currently working to send teams to conduct accurate assessments.

14. (C) The two station owners (whom we visited separately)

attribute their success to the fact that their work is for the people and by the people. The stations have played an important role in empowering their local communities and strengthening ties between different groups, with particular attention being paid to women and youth. Both stations engage in grassroots community organizing by working with civil society members, Shura members, women's groups, lawyers and doctors to improve local conditions. This direct involvement in the community gives them constant insight into public opinion and local grievances. The owner of Nijrab Radio, Dr. Abdul Mutalleb, told us that his father is a leading member of his village and he sees himself as following in his father's footsteps by acting as a cultural communicator through radio. The Peace Radio director in Parwan, Abdul Ahad Rangbar, said that young people call in to his station with two main complaints: problems associated with Afghanistan's educational system and government corruption. The station owners cited jobs and education as the overall issues of importance to their local audiences.

¶5. (C) Both radio station owners have been threatened by insurgents. The Radio Nijrab owner indicated that he has received threatening phone calls from the Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin and night letters from the Taliban. He believes the Taliban threats are in response to the Taliban's distaste for gender programming, Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) messages (relating to PRT development projects) and music programming. The station owners are careful not to discuss specific issues related to security or the insurgency on the radio, but aside from this, the threats they face have not steered them away from providing meaningful programming to their communities.

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¶6. (C) Given the often negative attitude nearby residents have towards Bagram Air Field (dating back to when Bagram was a Soviet base), Peace Radio's owner sees himself as providing vital communication aimed towards improving the relationship between the U.S. military and the local community. In addition to information campaigns, the military uses PRT funds to make improvements to station infrastructure. Both stations were receptive to programming that might forge closer bonds between Americans and Afghans, including by connecting USG civilian representatives and local community groups, as well developing joint programs focused on cultural exchanges and educational opportunities between the U.S. and Afghanistan.

¶7. (SBU) Peace Radio was initially run by Zakia Zaki, one of the first female radio broadcasters in Afghanistan. In 2007, she was brutally murdered in her home by the Taliban for her women's rights activism. Her murder was widely reported, both in Afghanistan and internationally. Zakia Zaki's husband took over the station and runs it in her honor. He has maintained the focus on women's issues and continues to play her archived programs, as she is still seen by local women as a philosopher and hero. Women working at home, who are often illiterate, are a key audience of both radio stations since they are able to listen from home during the day while the men are at work. Asked about the status of women in Parwan, Peace Radio's owner responded that the condition of local women has improved in the last several years. Women can now be seen shopping in bazaars, attending vocational training, traveling for work and educational purposes, and even participating in voting activities that were unheard of during the Taliban era.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: Strengthening our efforts to support Afghans who work under extremely difficult circumstances to bring positive change to their communities must be part of our counter-insurgency strategy. The owners of Peace Radio and Radio Nijrab are two such positive influencers. These active members of Afghan civil society risk their lives on a daily basis to address the most important issues in their communities, even as they grapple with the deterrent effects

that poor security, frequent insurgent threats and the sway of extremist propaganda have on their work. In the months ahead, we will work with the Embassy Public Affairs Section to seek out opportunities to assist, e.g., through cultural exchanges, training for local journalists and technical staff, help with content development, and participation in the International Visitor program.

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